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(54) SYSTEM AND METHOD OF CONTROLLING APPLICATION LEVEL ACCESS OF SUBSCRIBER TO A NETWORK

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(57) ABSTRACT

The invention is a system and method of controlling an access of a subscriber to a network. The method includes sending an identification of the subscriber and a level of access to be provided to the subscriber from a visited network of a plurality of networks (12, 14, 16) connected to a home network (10); in response to the identification of the subscriber and a level of access to be provided to the subscriber, storing a subscriber profile of the authorized of access to be provided to the subscriber; and controlling access of the subscriber to any network dependent upon a comparison of access to be provided to the subscriber and the stored subscriber profile.

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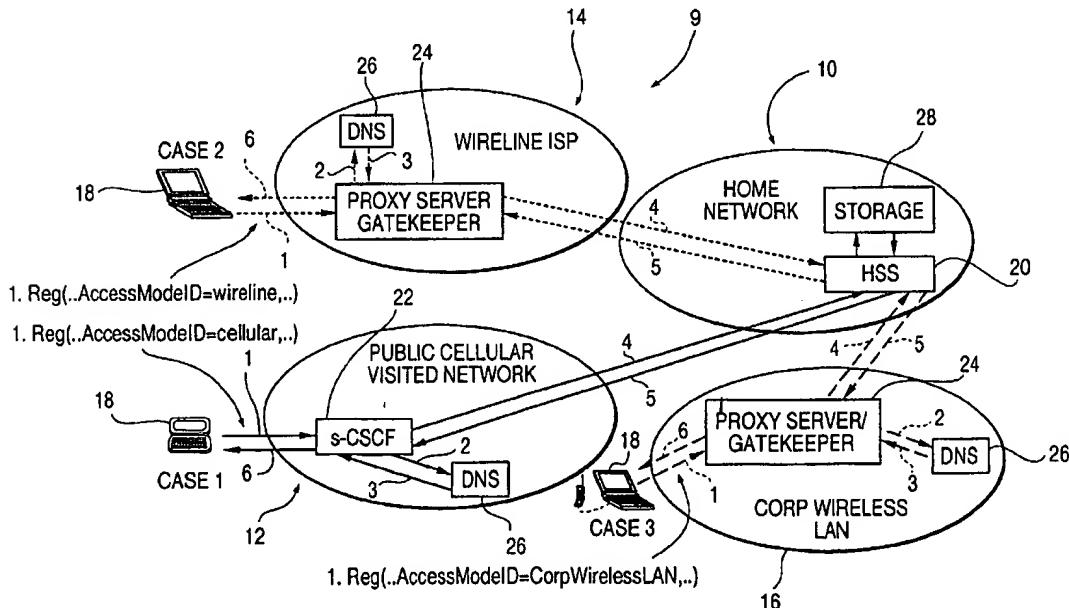


FIG. 1

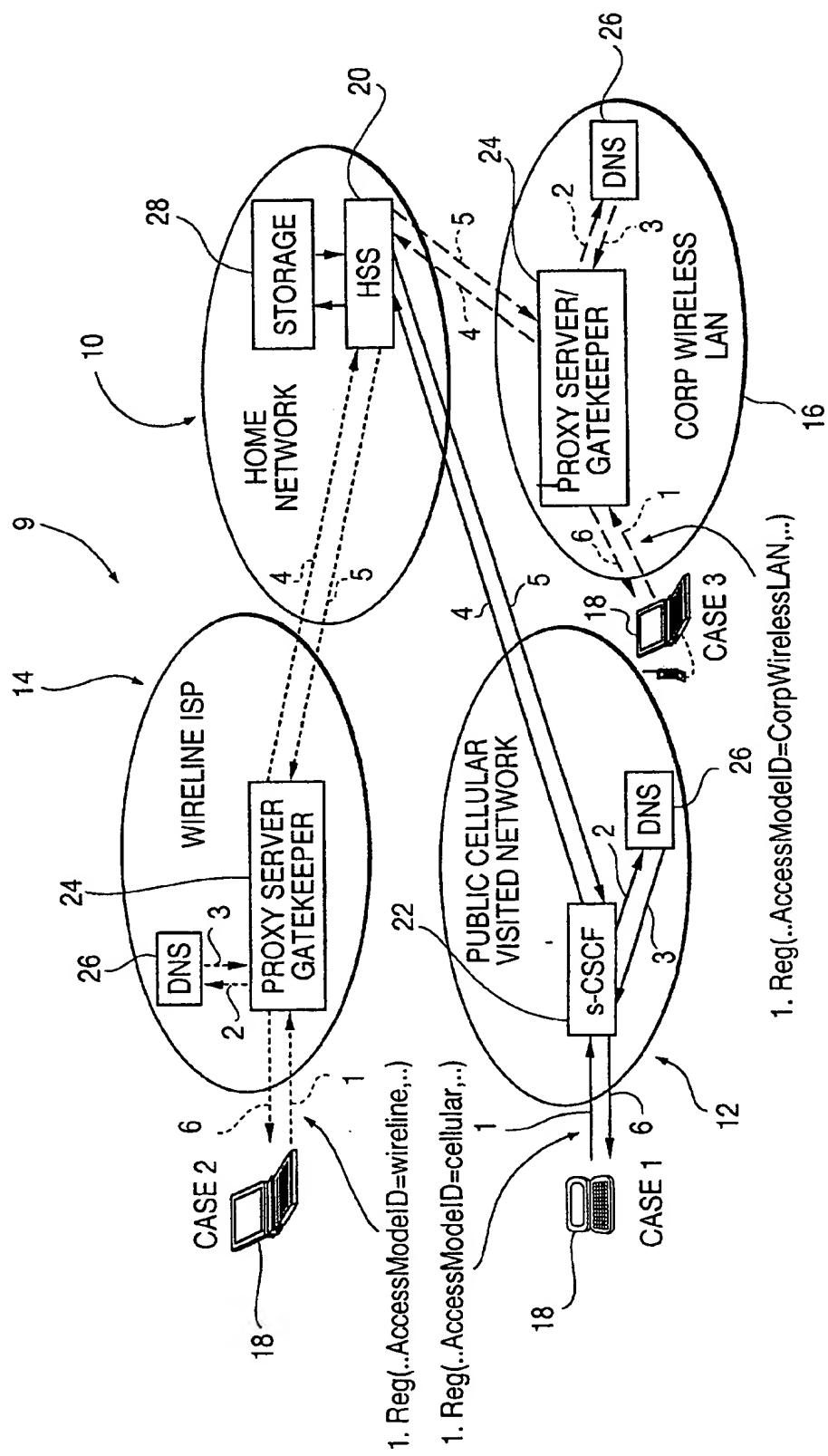


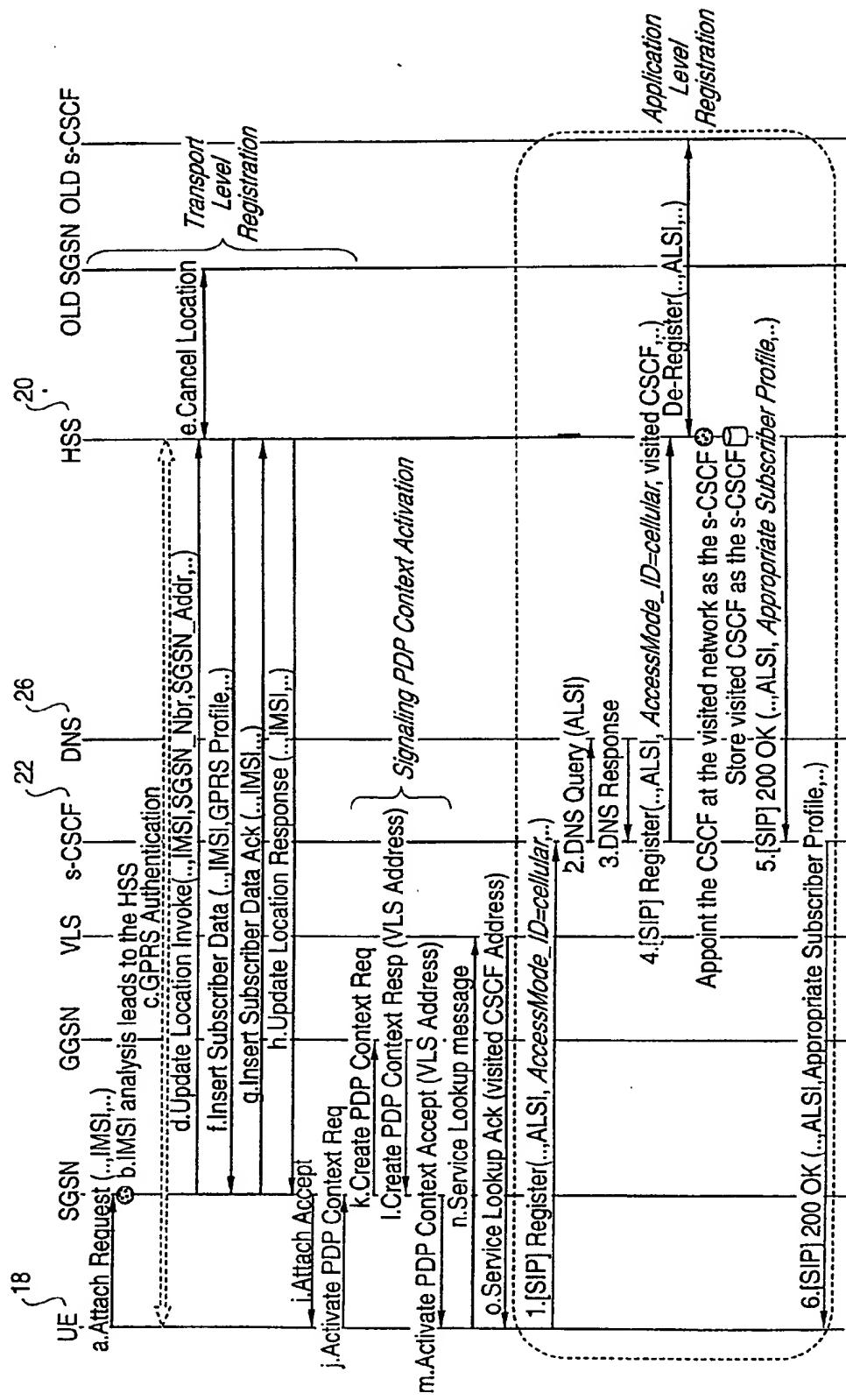
FIG. 2


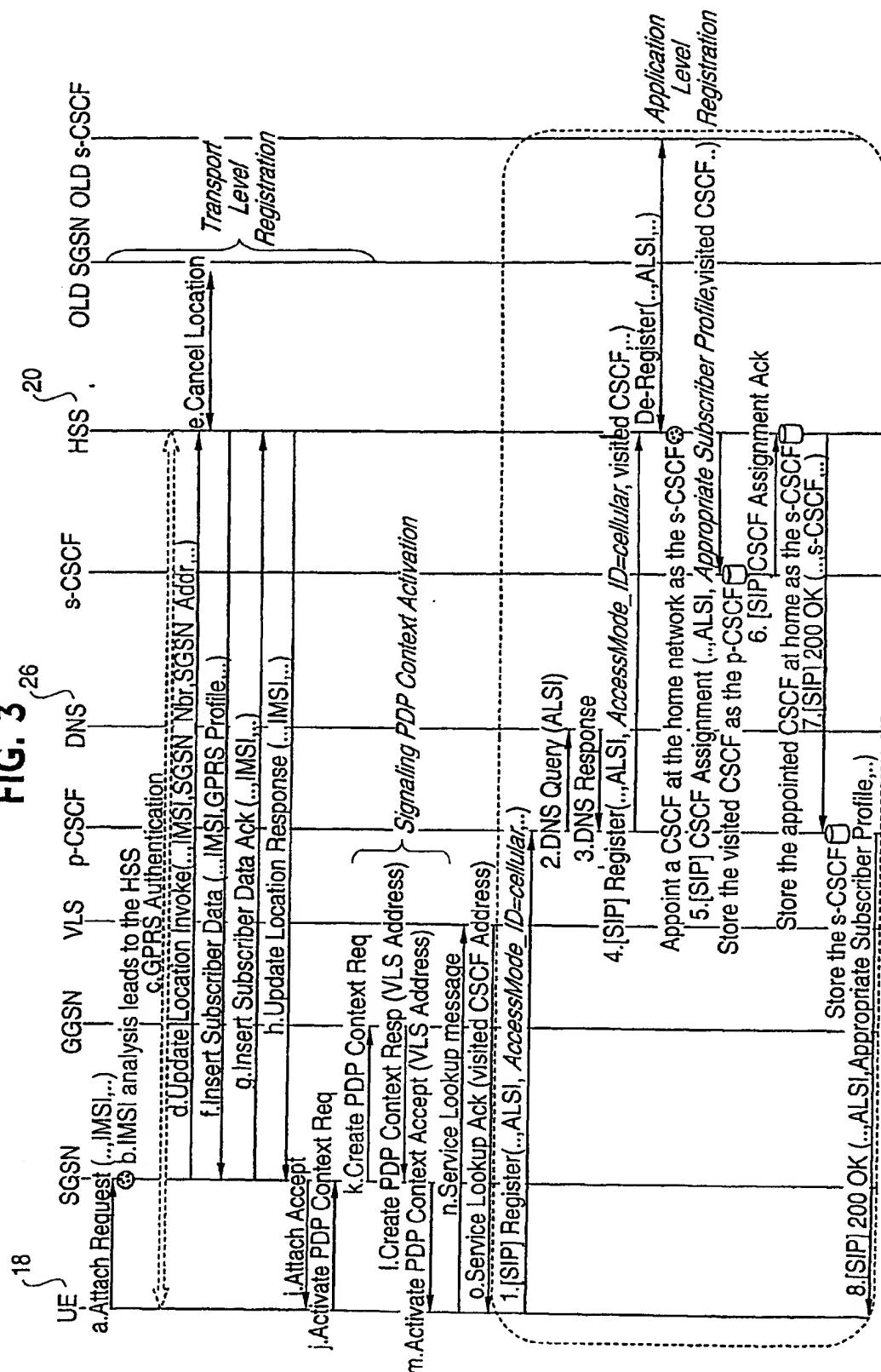
FIG. 3


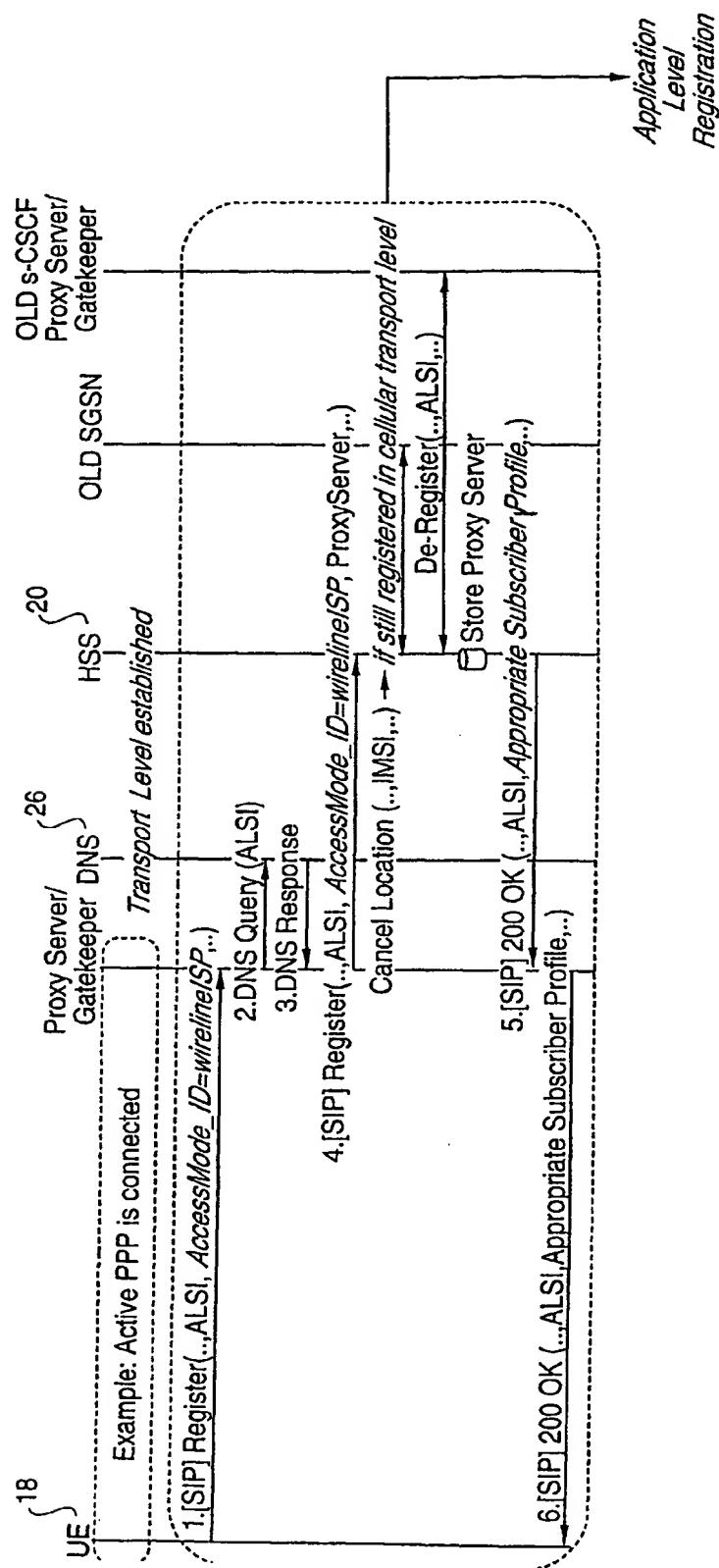
FIG. 4

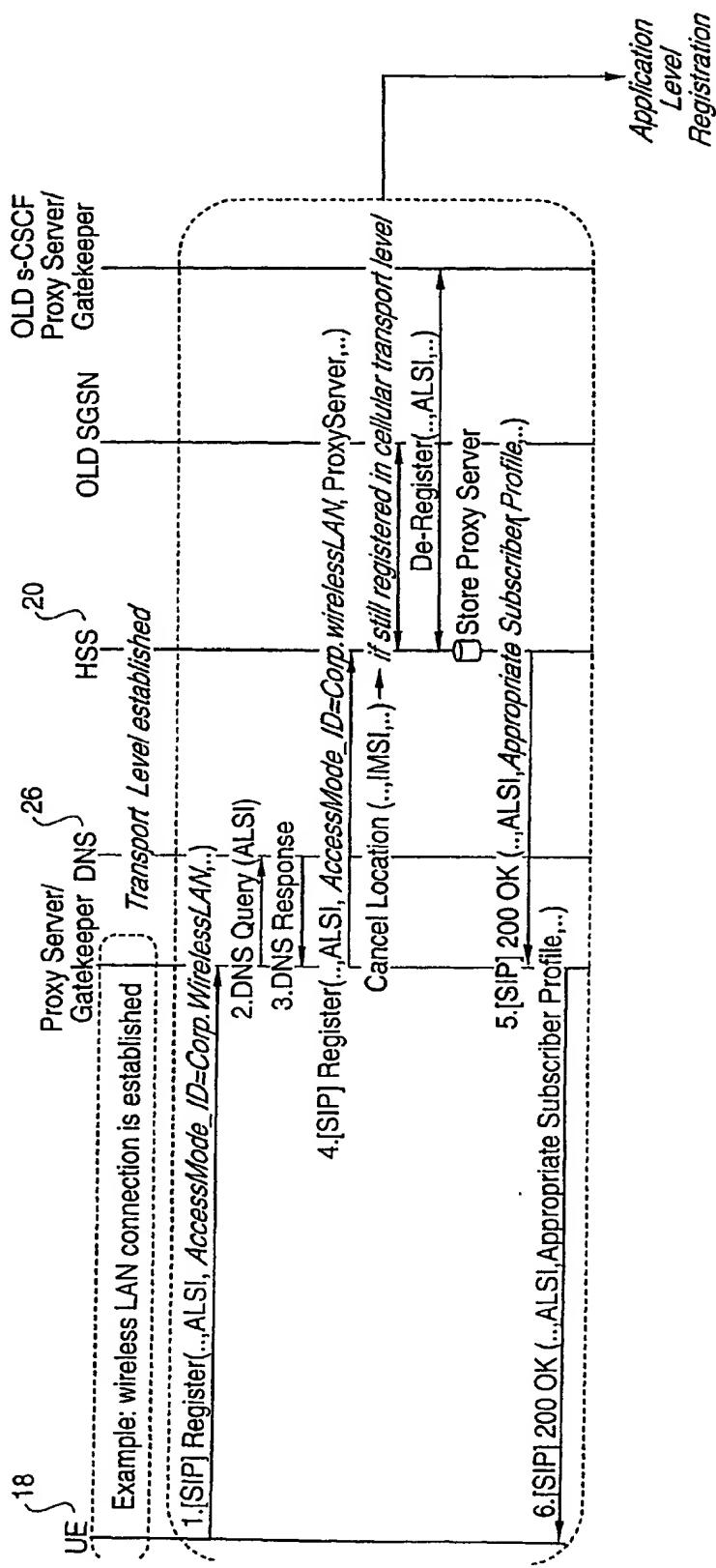
FIG. 5

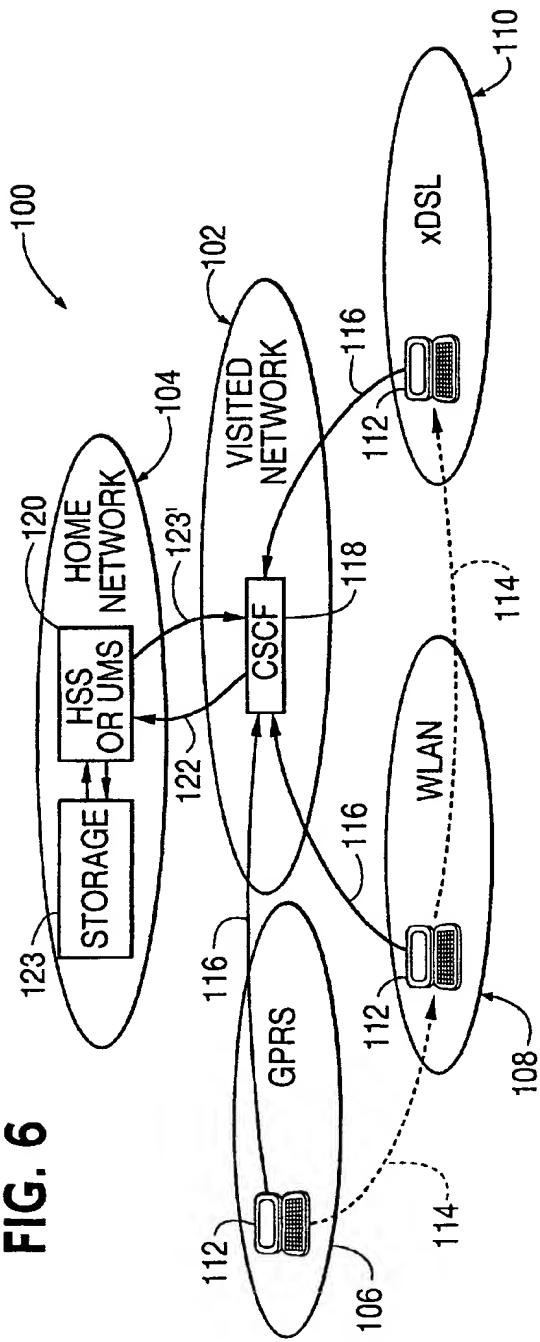
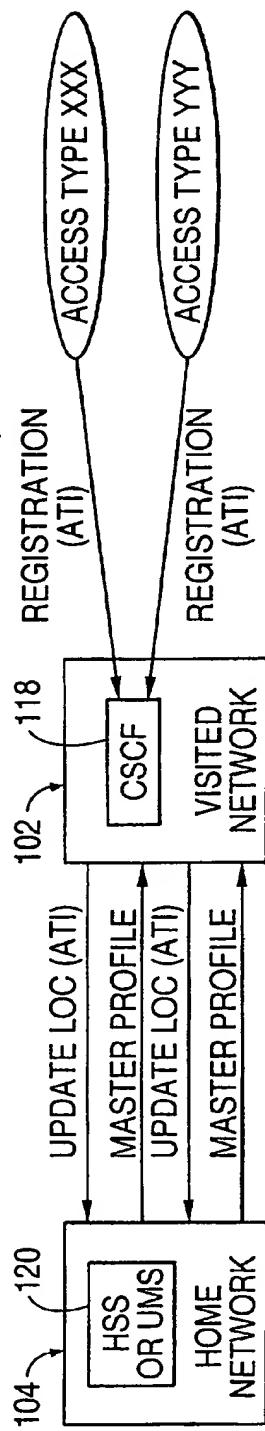
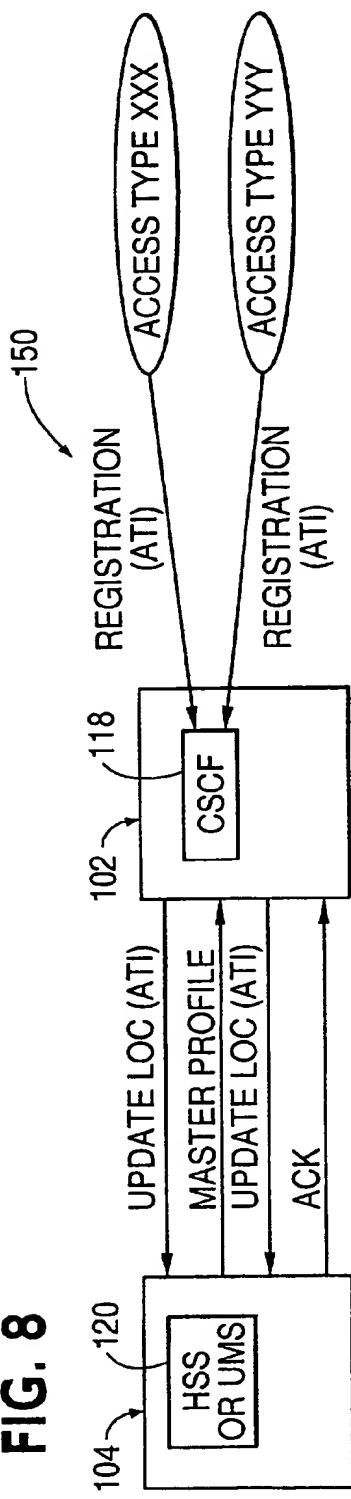
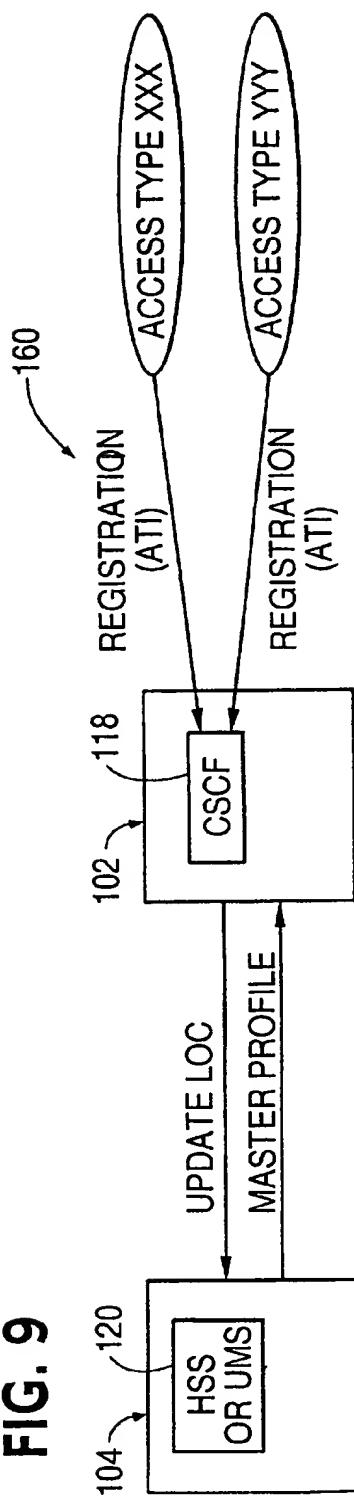
FIG. 6**FIG. 7**

FIG. 8**FIG. 9**

**SYSTEM AND METHOD OF CONTROLLING
APPLICATION LEVEL ACCESS OF SUBSCRIBER
TO A NETWORK**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a system and method for controlling level or type of access of a subscriber to a network.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

[0002] Access to a home network, through a visited network, has been limited to a single level of access. As a result, subscriber equipment has not been portable across multiple visited networks which are connected to a home network in view of their functionality being limited to a single level or type of access. In essence, each visited network through which a subscriber obtains access to a home network is limited to a single subscriber profile and does not provide for multiple subscriber profiles to facilitate different types of connectivity of a subscriber through a visited network to a home network.

[0003] Also seamless roaming, whether under the control of a home network or a visited network between different types of access networks, is an essential requirement in future mobile and fixed networks. While roaming between different types of access technologies, the entity providing voice over internet protocol/internet protocol (VoIP/IP) multimedia services may remain in the same network regardless of whether the network providing the multimedia services is a home or visited network. Examples of such entities VoIP/IP multimedia networks are, e.g. Call State Control function (CSCF), Gate Keeper, SIP Server.

[0004] Different types of access networks have their own characteristics, such as quality of service (QoS) (max bandwidth, delay, etc) and there also may be differences between the set of available services. Access networks may have divergent behavior (e.g. location based services).

[0005] Another problem is that the entity where the subscriber subscription information is located in the network (e.g. User Mobility Server) (UMS) in 3GPP R00, has to know the access network type to be able to screen terminating communications to the subscriber if the currently used access network does not support that particular service or requested minimum QoS.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention is a system and method of controlling access of a subscriber to any network. The access may be application level access. During application level registration, an application level message is sent from subscriber equipment connected to a home network or visited network which is one of a plurality of visited networks connected to the home network. The visited network may be one of a plurality of visited networks directly connected to the home network or may be one of a plurality of access networks which are connected to the home network through a visited network. The application level message includes a subscriber identity and level of access to any network which may be the home network, any one of the plurality of networks or another network to which the subscriber may be connected. The level of access may be in the form of an

access mode ID comprised of a plurality of bits which uniquely identify one of a plurality of choices of level of access to another network which are available to any network to which the subscriber may connect subscriber equipment.

[0007] The networks directly connected to the home network in accordance with the invention are diverse in nature and without limitation may be a public cellular visited network such as a general packet radio system (GPRS), a wireline internet service provider (ISP), or a wireless local area network (LAN) such as, but without limitation, a local area network within a corporation. Regardless of the type of visited network directly connected to the home network, the application level registration message is sent from an entity in the visited network to an address of an entity in the home network which address is obtained from another network entity in the visited network. The entity in the home network receiving the application level registration message uses the received identification of the subscriber and the level or type of access to fetch from a storage in the home network a subscriber profile which is to be used to provide connectivity to the user equipment in the visited network and any network in accordance with the specified level or type of access in the application level registration message. The identification of the level or type of access contained in the application level of registration message is a pointer to the subscriber profile specifying the level or type of access and, upon fetching from the storage, is caused to be stored in a network entity either in the home network or in the visited network. The accessed subscriber profile is stored in the home network and accessed through a proxy entity in the visited network or is transmitted from the home network to the entity in the visited network from which the application level registration message was transmitted. Such entity is without limitation, a proxy server, gateway or serving call state control function (s-CSCF). The entity storing the subscriber profile in either the home network or the visited network functions to control the communications in accordance with well-known procedures for the subscriber user equipment in the visited network and the home network. If the visited network is a public cellular visited network, the entity receiving the subscriber profile for storage therein may be a s-CSCF; and if the visited network is a wireline ISP or a wireless LAN, the entity in the visited network receiving the subscriber profile may be a proxy server utilizing the session initiation protocol (SIP) or a gatekeeper in accordance with the H.323 specification. The entity in the visited network which resolves the address in the home network to which the application level registration message is addressed may be a domain name server (DNS).

[0008] Different levels or types of access may be used to provide diverse types of connectivity. The access may be an application level access. For example, the diverse types of connectivity may provide a different degree of bandwidth in communications for each different access, a different degree of secured communications for each different access, or different supported supplemental services for each different access which supplemental services may be diverse in nature, such as diverse telephony services without limitation thereof.

[0009] The networks connected to the home network through a visiting network providing services to a subscriber may be access networks such as, without limitation, a GPRS,

wireless local area network (WLAN) or a DSL network. The call control entity in the controlling network needs to know at the time of registration the type of access network at which subscriber registration occurs. An access type indicator provided to the call control entity provides the requisite identification of access network. The access type indicator may be provided to the home network directly or indirectly through a visited network from subscriber equipment, an interface between the subscriber equipment and the access network or by determination of a call control entity based upon characteristics of the access network such as, without limitation, packet characteristics.

[0010] The generation of the subscriber profile and the use thereof at the home network or at a control entity may be accomplished in many ways. Without limitation, the subscriber registration at an access network may be accomplished by transmitting an access type indicator directly to or through a visited network to the home network which identifies the type of access network at which registration has occurred. The source of the access type indicator may be explicitly provided by subscriber equipment or an interface between the subscriber equipment and the access network at which the subscriber is registered or implicitly from the control entity in a visited network analyzing the notice of the communications to form the access network to the control entity. Thereafter, the home network generates or accesses the subscriber profile which may have two parts which are a general service part and a part particular to the characteristics of the access type network to which the subscriber may roam.

[0011] A method of controlling access of a subscriber to a network in accordance with the invention includes sending an identification of the subscriber and an access to be provided to the subscriber from the visited network of a plurality of networks connected to the home network to the home network; in response to the identification of the subscriber and the access to be provided to the subscriber storing a subscriber profile of an authorized access to be provided to the subscriber; and controlling access of the subscriber to any network dependent upon a comparison of service to be provided to the subscriber and the stored subscriber profile. The access may be an application level of access. The storing of the subscriber profile may be in the home network or may be in the visited network. Each access may provide a different degree of bandwidth in communications; a different degree of security in communications for each different access; or a different supported supplementary services for each different access. The home network may be an internet protocol network and the visited network may be a wireless public cellular bearer network. The public cellular bearer network may be a general packet radio system network. The home network may be an internet protocol network and the visited network may be an internet service provider. The home network may be an internet protocol network and the visited network may be a wireless local area network. The authorized access may be chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber between the plurality of connected networks and the home network. An application level registration message containing the identification of the subscriber and the access may be generated in response to a request from subscriber equipment to a visited network entity; in response to an entity in the visited network receiving the request, an address of an entity in the home network may be obtained

from a routing analysis in the visited network; and the application level registration message may be transmitted to the address in the home network. An entity of the home network may obtain the subscriber profile in response to receipt of the application level registration message.

[0012] A system in accordance with the invention includes a home network which stores a plurality of subscriber profiles each defining an access to be provided to a subscriber to a network; a plurality of networks connected to the home network; subscriber equipment connected to a visited network of the plurality of networks through which the subscriber obtains an access to any network; and wherein in response to connection of the subscriber equipment to the visited network, an identification of the subscriber and an access to be provided to the subscriber is sent to the home network, and a subscriber profile of an access to be provided to the subscriber is stored in one of the networks and access of the subscriber to any network is controlled by one of the networks storing the subscriber network dependent upon a comparison of the service to be provided to the subscriber and the stored subscriber profile. A network entity within the home network or within the visited network may store the subscriber profile.

[0013] A method of controlling access of a subscriber to roam in networks in accordance with the invention includes providing an identification of the subscriber and an access of the subscriber at a home network, the access comprising an identification of access to one of the networks in which the subscriber is registered; in response to the providing of the identification of the subscriber and the access at the home network, storing a subscriber profile indicating an access to be provided to the subscriber to at least the networks; and using the stored subscriber profile in controlling service provided to the subscriber. The controlling of the service provided to the subscriber may occur while the subscriber is roaming in a visited network and the networks may be access networks from which the subscriber may obtain services while roaming in the visited network. The subscriber profile may be stored in the home network or in a visited network. The sending of the identification of the subscriber and an access may occur in response to the transmission of an access type indicator identifying a network in which the subscriber is registered through the visited network to the home network. The subscriber profile may comprise general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the networks. The access may originate from equipment of the subscriber registered in one of the networks. The access may originate from a network entity providing an interface between the visited network and one of the access networks to which the subscriber is registered. The access may be determined by a call control entity based upon information obtained by the control entity about the network to which the subscriber is registered. In response to at least one subsequent identification of the subscriber and the access being provided at the home network, the home network may send to the visited network an acknowledgement of a change in registration of the subscriber to another access network. The access may be used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.

[0014] A method of controlling access of a subscriber to register in networks in accordance with the invention

includes providing an identification of the subscriber at a home network; in response to the providing of the identification of the subscriber, storing a subscriber profile of an access to be provided to the subscriber to at least the networks; and using the stored subscriber profile in controlling service provided to the subscriber. The controlling of the service provided to the subscriber may occur while the subscriber is registered in a visited network and the networks may be access networks from which the subscriber may obtain services while registered in the visited network. The storing of the subscriber profile may be in the home network or in the visited network. The providing of the identification of the subscriber may occur in response to transmission of an access type indicator to the home network identifying an access network in which the subscriber is registered. The access may originate from equipment of the subscriber registered to one of the networks. The access may originate from a network entity providing an interface between the visited network and one of the access networks to which the subscriber is registered. The access may be determined by a call control entity based upon information obtained by the control entity about the network to which the subscriber is registered.

[0015] A system in accordance with the invention includes a home network which stores a plurality of subscriber profiles each defining an application level of access to be provided to a subscriber while registered in networks; networks in which the subscriber may register; at least one subscriber equipment which is connected to the networks while the subscriber is registered therein; and wherein in response to connection of the subscriber equipment to one of the networks at least an identification of the subscriber is provided at the home network, a subscriber profile of an authorized access to be provided to the subscriber to at least the networks is stored, and the stored subscriber profile is used in controlling service provided to the subscriber. The controlling of the service provided to the subscriber may occur while the subscriber is registered in a visited network and the networks may be access networks from which the subscriber may obtain services while roaming in the visited network. A storage in a visited network may store the subscriber profile. An access comprising an identification of access to one of the networks in which the subscriber is registered may be transmitted from the visited network to the home network and the storing of the subscriber profile may be in response to the identification of access at the home network. The stored subscriber profile may be used by the visited network in controlling service provided to the subscriber.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] FIG. 1 illustrates a first embodiment of a plurality of networks connected to a home network in accordance with the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 2 illustrates a first embodiment of connectivity of a subscriber through subscriber equipment from a public cellular visited network to a home network in accordance with FIG. 1 assuming call control is at the visited network.

[0018] FIG. 3 illustrates a second embodiment of connectivity of a subscriber through subscriber equipment from a public cellular visited network to a home network in accordance with FIG. 1 assuming call control is at the home network.

[0019] FIG. 4 illustrates connectivity of a subscriber through subscriber equipment through a wireline ISP to a home network in accordance with the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 5 illustrates connectivity of a subscriber through subscriber equipment through a wireless LAN to a home network in accordance with the present invention.

[0021] FIG. 6 illustrates a second embodiment of a plurality of networks connected to a home network through a visited network in accordance with the present invention.

[0022] FIG. 7 illustrates a first methodology of generation and transferring of subscriber profile information with the embodiment of FIG. 6.

[0023] FIG. 8 illustrates a second methodology of generation and transferring of subscriber profile information with the embodiment of FIG. 6.

[0024] FIG. 9 illustrates a third methodology of generation and transferring of subscriber profile information with the embodiment of FIG. 6.

[0025] Like parts are identically identified throughout the drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0026] FIG. 1 illustrates a first embodiment 9 of a plurality of networks directly connected to a home network 10. The plurality of connected networks which, without limitation, may be as illustrated in FIG. 1 a public cellular visited network 12 such as GPRS, a wireline ISP 14 and a corporation wireless LAN 16. As illustrated, the connectivity of the particular subscriber equipment 18 is identified as "Case 1", "Case 2" and "Case 3" respectively between the public cellular visited network 12, wireline ISP 14 or corporation wireless LAN 16 and the home network 10. In each of the three cases, an application level registration message is sent from an entity, such as s-CSCF 22 or Proxy Server/Gatekeeper 24, in a visited one the plurality of networks 12, 14 and 16 connected to a home subscriber server (HSS) 20 or user mobility server (UMS) which contains the subscriber identification and the different profile for different access modes to be provided to the subscriber. The application level registration message contains an identification of the subscriber such as, but not limited to, the IMSI of the subscriber equipment 18 and the level or type of access which is encoded as a multiple bit access mode identification and is transmitted from the network entity 22 or 24 in the visited network to the HSS 20 in the home network 10. In the public cellular visited network 12, the entity transmitting the application level registration message is a s-CSCF 22 which is well known; in the wireline ISP the entity transmitting the application level registration message is a proxy server/gatekeeper 24 which are well known with the proxy server using the SIP protocol or the gatekeeper being in accordance with the H.323 specification; and in the corporate wireless LAN 16, the network entity is also a proxy server/gatekeeper 24.

[0027] Case 1 operation is explained from an overview standpoint as follows. The subscriber utilizes subscriber equipment 18 to transmit message "1" to the s-CSCF 22 to request an application level registration through the public cellular visited network 12 to the home network 10. The

s-CSCF 22 transmits message "2" to a DNS 26 which resolves the address of the HSS 20 to which the application level registration message is to be sent from the s-CSCF 22. The address is returned from the DNS 26 to the s-CSCF 22 as message "3". Thereafter the s-CSCF 22 transmits message "4" to the HSS 20 which contains the subscriber identification and an identification of the application level of connectivity which is sought. The HSS 20 retrieves from a storage 28 a subscriber profile of an authorized type or level of access associated with the subscriber identified in the message received by the HSS 20. The storage 28 may be any home network entity and may be part of the HSS 20. The storage 28 stores for each of the connected networks 12, 14 and 16 or any other network, including networks other than the networks illustrated in FIG. 1 to which the subscriber may be connected to obtain telecommunications services, one of a plurality of selectable subscriber profiles defining the authorized level or type of access. Thereafter, when the home network decides that the call control will be located in the visited network in this embodiment, the network entity 20 transmits message "5" containing the subscriber profile containing the authorized level or type of access to the s-CSCF 22 for storage therein. The retrieved subscriber profile is compared by the s-CSCF with the level or type of service contained in a requested type of connection, which may be any type of telecommunications connection of the subscriber, through the visited network 12. The control of access of the subscriber in the visited network 12 is dependent upon a comparison of the level or type of service which is sought to be provided to the subscriber by an attempt to connect the subscriber through the visited network 12 and the stored subscriber profile of the authorized level or type of access.

[0028] Case 2 operates in a manner analogous to Case 1 with the communications "1"-“6” therein being of the same nature as described with respect to Case 1 with the exception that the visited network entity of the wireline ISP 14 is a proxy server/gatekeeper 24 instead of the s-CSCF 22 of the public cellular visited network 12.

[0029] Case 3 operates in a manner analogous to Case 1 with the communications "1"-“6” being of the same nature as described with respect to Case 1 with the exception that the visited network entity of the wireless LAN 16 is a proxy server/gatekeeper 24 instead of the s-CSCF 22 of the public cellular visited network 12.

[0030] The subscriber profiles of levels or types of access which are available for communications between a subscriber through subscriber equipment 18 and any connected network are diverse in nature. For example, without limitation, the subscriber profiles may each identify a different level or type of access providing a different degree of bandwidth in communications for each different access; a different degree of security in communications for each different access mode or different connection of supplementary services for each different access. For example, the use of different bandwidths for connectivity between the subscriber equipment and the visited network or the home network may be dependent upon an authorized expense of communications available to the subscriber, the functionality of the subscriber equipment or network conditions. For example, the different degrees of access for security purposes may be dependent upon the subscriber, the network or the subscriber equipment. As a result of the diversity of the

types or levels of access which may be requested by or allocated to the subscriber, it is possible to provide different types of connection services to the subscriber when connecting different types of subscriber equipment 18 through different networks 12, 14 and 16 or any other connected network including networks not illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0031] FIGS. 2 and 3 illustrate detailed call flows for first and second embodiments of a public cellular visited network functioning as the visited network connected to the home network 10. The distinction between FIGS. 2 and 3 is that in FIG. 3 the s-CSCF, which controls the communications, resides in the home network with a p (proxy)-CSCF residing in the visited network 12 which functions as an intermediate entity in the providing of connectivity for the communications between the storage of the subscriber profiles of the levels or types of access in the s-CSCF of the home network and the visited network. In essence the p-CSCF acts as a proxy call state control function in the visited network with the actual call state control function being exercised by the s-CSCF in the home network 10.

[0032] With reference to FIG. 2, the transport level registration procedure and the signalling packet data protocol (PDP) context establishment are generally in accordance with the prior art procedures for public cellular networks such as GPRS and therefore are only described briefly.

[0033] The conventional communications of FIG. 2 are described as follows: The communications begin with an attached request at "a" which contains the user equipment IMSI which is transmitted from the subscriber equipment to a serving GPRS support node. Thereafter, at "b" an IMSI analysis occurs in order to obtain the address of the HSS 20 in the home network 10. The next operation "c" is a GPRS authentication as illustrated by the bidirectional communications between the UE and the HSS 20. At "d" a communication is transmitted from the SGSN to the HSS 20. The HSS 20 replies back to the SGSN at "f" with an insert subscriber data message. The SGSN replies back to the HSS with an insert subscriber data acknowledgment at "g". The HSS 20 replies with an update location response at "h". The SGSN transmits an attachment acceptance at "i" to the UE. The UE transmits an activate PDP context request at "j" to the SGSN. The SGSN creates a PDP context request at "k" which is transmitted to a gateway GPRS support node. The SGSN transmits a create PDP context response at "l". The SGSN transmits an activate PDP context acceptance to the UE at "m". The UE transmits at "o" a service lookup message to a visited CSCF location server (VLS). This sequence contains the transport level registration and signalling PDP context activation.

[0034] The application level registration involving steps "1"-“6” is in accordance with the steps 1-6 described above with reference to FIG. 1. For each new application level registration message, a s-CSCF is associated with the subscriber profile which has been fetched in response to the application level registration message. With each new application level registration message, the previous s-CSCF is deactivated. This is identified by "De-Register (. . . , ALSI, . . .)" in FIG. 2. The transmission of the subscriber profile to the s-CSCF of the visited network for storage therein provides the s-CSCF with the subscriber profile which is used for a comparison of the level or type of service to be provided to the subscriber and the stored subscriber profile.

in order to control access of the subscriber to the network which may either be granted or denied depending upon whether the comparison yields that the level or type of access does not exceed the stored level or type of access contained in the subscriber profile. As illustrated, step "6" shows the authorization of the subscriber equipment in order to have connectivity which is identified in step 6 by "200 ok" which is a standard SIP designation for a granted authorization.

[0035] FIG. 3, as discussed above, is analogous to FIG. 2 except that the s-CSCF is resident in the home network 10 and a p-CSCF is resident in the visited network through which the communications involving the application level registration message are routed between the UE and the HSS 20 of the home network 10. As a result of the p-CSCF being resident in the visited network 12, additional messages "[SIP]CSCF assignment" identified as "5" and "[SIP]CSCF Assignment Ack" identified as "6" are required but otherwise the communications are identical to FIG. 2. Messages 5 and 6 are used by the HSS 20 to assign a s-CSCF in the home network and download the subscriber profile to the s-CSCF.

[0036] FIG. 4 illustrates the sequence of communications for the wireline ISP 14 with the transport level registration process, which is well known, having been established. The communications "1"-“6” are in accordance with FIG. 1 except that the deregistration process between the HSS and an old SGSN and an old one of a s-CSCF/Proxy Server/Gatekeeper are illustrated involving previous application level registration messages. The communications "1"-“6” are analogous to the communications of FIGS. 2 and 3 with the exception that the proxy server is the entity in the wireline ISP 14 through which the application level registration message communications are routed and further which stores the fetched subscriber profile.

[0037] FIG. 5 illustrates the sequence of communications between the corporate wireless LAN 16 and the home network 10. The transport level registration process, which is well known, is established. The communications "1"-“6” are in accordance with FIG. 1 except that the deregistration process between the HSS and an old SGSN and an old one of a s-CSCF/Proxy Server/Gatekeeper are illustrated involving previous application level registration messages.

[0038] FIG. 6 illustrates a second embodiment 100 of a plurality of networks connected through a visited network 102 to a home network 104. The plurality of networks may be access type networks which, without limitation, may be as illustrated a GPRS network 106, a wireless local area network (WLAN) 108, or a DSL network 110. The embodiment 100 is different than the embodiment 9 of FIG. 1 in that subscriber equipment 112 is registered in the access networks 106, 108 and 110 by connection through the visited network 102 to the home network 104 which performs the same functions generally as the home network 10 of FIG. 1. The subscriber's roaming between registration in the access networks 106, 108 and 110 is indicated by dotted line 114. In the embodiment 100, the subscriber equipment 112 generates a transport level registration message which is known and an application level registration message 116 which is communicated to the CSCF entity 118 of visited network 102. The application level registration message 116 provides at least an identification of the subscriber and in two

embodiments as discussed below, a level or type of access which is transmitted to the CSCF entity 118 and then to an HSS or UMS entity 120 of home network 104. The CSCF 118 transmits a message, e.g. a SIP register message 122 to the HSS or UMS 120 of the home network 104. The update location message 122 informs the HSS or UMS 120 of the subscriber equipment identification and particular access network 106, 108 or 110 at which the subscriber equipment 112 is registered so as to permit the home network 104 to route communications through the visited network 102 to the particular access network 106, 108 or 110 in which the subscriber is registered. In addition to the updating of the location of the subscriber equipment 112 in two embodiments described below, an access type indicator (ATI) is transmitted from the CSCF entity 118 to the HSS or UMS 120 which identifies the type of access network at which the subscriber is registered. The content of the ATI permits the HSS or UMS to control connectivity through the visited network 102 for communications which are to terminate in one of the access networks 106, 108 and 110, such as, for example, based upon a subscriber profile stored in storage 123, which is analogous to the relationship between the HSS 20 and the storage 28 of the home network 10 of the embodiment 9 of FIG. 1. The HSS or UMS 120 transmits, at least in response to the first registration message from one of the access type networks 106, 108 and 110, a subscriber profile to be used by the CSCF entity 118 in controlling of connectivity communications to the subscriber equipment 112. The subscriber profile may be all subscriber data, which is not organized into any specific access network specific information, that is conveyed to the CSCF entity 118 or, alternatively, the subscriber profile may be general service data which pertains to aspects of the subscriber which are not particular to the access type networks 106, 108 and 110 and access specific information which pertains to service aspects of the subscriber which are particular to the access specific networks in which the subscriber equipment 112 roams. The general subscriber information and the access specific information are referred to as "a master profile" hereinbelow.

[0039] Upon registration of the subscriber with one of the access networks 106, 108 and 110, it is necessary to inform at least the CSCF entity 118 and in two embodiments discussed below the HSS or UMS 120 of the type of the access network in which the subscriber is registered.

[0040] The methodology of informing the CSCF entity 118 of the type of access type network 106, 108, 110 to which the subscriber is registered may be explicit or implicit. The first manner of generating an explicit ATI is where the terminal 112 provides the ATI to the CSCF entity 118. Another explicit manner of generating the ATI is from a network element providing an interface for the CSCF in that access network between the subscriber equipment 112 and the access type 106, 108 and 110 which transmits the ATI to the CSCF entity 118. Finally, the CSCF entity 118 may implicitly determine from the received communications, the type or identity of the ATI network, such as by the source address or route of the packets coming from the access network. Each time a terminal roams between one access type network to another access type network as indicated by arrow 114, it is necessary, as described above, for the CSCF entity 118 to determine the type of network in which the terminal 112 is currently registered.

[0041] FIG. 7 illustrates a first methodology 140 in which the ATI is generated by one of the access type networks which are denominated as "XXX" and "YYY". The ATI is communicated to the CSCF entity 118 which is transmitted along with the update location information to the HSS or UMS 120 which conveys the subscriber equipment identification. The ATI includes an identification of the type of network at which the subscriber equipment 112 is registered. While not illustrated in FIG. 7, storage 123 in the home network 104 is accessed to obtain the subscriber profile which is retrieved based upon the identification of the subscriber and the nature of the access type network to which the subscriber is registered. This information is transmitted as a master profile to the CSCF entity 118 which functions as the call controlling entity in a known manner to permit or deny termination of communications to the subscriber equipment 112 based upon the subscriber profile and the capability of the current access type network to provide the required type of connectivity.

[0042] For example, the subscriber profile may permit communications to be terminated to the subscriber equipment 112 at one of the access type networks but, at the time at which termination is desired, the operational characteristics of the access type network may require refusal, all of which is performed by the CSCF entity 118 based upon having the master profile in its possession. Each time the terminal 112 roams, as indicated by arrow 114, a new registration message 116 is generated which is transmitted from the access type network to the CSCF entity 118 which causes a new update location message including the ATI to be sent to the HSS or UMS 120 of the home network 104. Thereafter, the master profile is transmitted from the HSS or UMS 120 to the CSCF entity 118. This process will occur each time a new registration occurs produced by roaming between the access type networks 106, 108 and 110.

[0043] FIG. 8 illustrates a second methodology 150 by which the subscriber information is processed. The communications are identical to the methodology 140 of FIG. 7 except that, in this circumstance, an acknowledgment 123' is sent from the HSS or the UMS 120 to the CSCF 118 after the first registration has occurred as a consequence of the subscriber profile already being stored in the CSCF entity 118. This enhances network efficiency.

[0044] FIG. 9 illustrates a third methodology 160 by which the subscriber information is processed. The procedure 160 of FIG. 9 differs from the procedures 140 and 150 respectively of FIGS. 7 and 8 in that the ATI is only transmitted to the CSCF entity 118. Only the update location information is transmitted from the CSCF entity 118 to the HSS or UMS 120 followed by the transmission of the master profile back to the CSCF as performed in the procedures 140 and 150. The difference is that, as a consequence of the HSS or UMS 120 not knowing the ATI, the home network 104 cannot perform any call termination functions which can result in the overall network being less efficient in that a communication which is not suited for termination at the subscriber device 112 in a particular access type network will be transmitted to the visited network 102 where the CSCF entity 118 performs the function of denying termination of the communication in the appropriate circumstance either because the subscriber's profile does not permit such a termination to occur or even if the subscriber profile does permit the termination to occur, the functionality of the

access type network at the time that the communication is sought to be terminated does not permit the termination to occur.

[0045] If the CSCF entity 118 determines the ATI implicitly instead of with an explicit message as described above in the procedures 140, 150 and 160, the same processes are performed thereafter after the ATI indicating the type of access network at which the subscriber equipment 112 is registered is implicitly determined.

[0046] The embodiment of FIGS. 6-9 permits adaption of the network which includes a home network 102 and a visited network 104 to provide an available set of services to access type networks 106-110 in which a subscriber is registered. This permits such functions as call screening at the access network at which the subscriber terminal 112 is registered to be performed to deny connection thereto based upon any number of factors which may include quality of service (QoS).

[0047] In addition to when access network changes occur, at which time the HSS sends the subscriber information to the CSCF, the subscriber information may be requested at other times from the HSS by the CSCF.

[0048] While the invention has been described in terms of its preferred embodiments, it should be understood that numerous modifications may be made thereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the appended claims. It is intended that all such modifications fall within the scope of the appended claims.

1. A method of controlling access of a subscriber to a network comprising:

sending an identification of the subscriber and an access to be provided to the subscriber from a visited network of a plurality of networks connected to a home network;

in response to the identification of the subscriber and access to be provided to the subscriber, storing a subscriber profile of an authorized access to be provided to the subscriber; and

controlling access of the subscriber to any network dependent upon a comparison of the access to be provided to the subscriber and the stored subscriber profile.

2. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:

the storing of the subscriber profile is in the home network.

3. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:

the storing of the subscriber profile is in the visited network.

4. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:

each different access provides a different degree of bandwidth in communications.

5. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:

each access provides for a different degree of security in communications.

6. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:

each access provides different connection supplementary services.

7. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
each access provides a different degree of bandwidth in communications.
8. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
each access provides for a different degree of security in communications.
9. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
each access provides different connection supplementary services.
10. A method in accordance with claim 3 wherein:
each access provides a different degree of bandwidth in communications.
11. A method in accordance with claim 3 wherein:
each access provides for a different degree of security in communications.
12. A method in accordance with claim 3 wherein:
each access provides different connection supplementary services.
13. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the home network is an internet protocol network and the visited network is a wireless public cellular bearer network.
14. A method in accordance with claim 13 wherein:
the public cellular bearer network is a general packet radio system network.
15. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the home network is an internet protocol network and the visited network is an internet service provider.
16. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the home network is an internet protocol network and the one visited network is a wireless local area network.
17. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
18. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
19. A method in accordance with claim 3 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
20. A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
21. A method in accordance with claim 5 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
22. A method in accordance with claim 6 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
23. A method in accordance with claim 7 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
24. A method in accordance with claim 8 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
25. A method in accordance with claim 9 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
26. A method in accordance with claim 10 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
27. A method in accordance with claim 11 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
28. A method in accordance with claim 12 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
29. A method in accordance with claim 13 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
30. A method in accordance with claim 15 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
31. A method in accordance with claim 16 wherein:
the access is chosen from a plurality of authorized accesses which may be granted to the subscriber.
32. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
an application level registration message containing the identification of the subscriber and the access is generated in response to a request from subscriber equipment to a visited network entity;
in response to an entity in the visited network receiving the request, an address of an entity in the home network is obtained from a routing analysis in the visited network; and
the application level registration message is transmitted to the address in the home network.
33. A method in accordance with claim 32 wherein:
an entity of the home network obtains the subscriber profile in response to receipt of the application level registration message.
34. A system comprising:
a home network which stores a plurality of subscriber profiles each defining an access to be provided to a subscriber to a network;
a plurality of networks connected to the home network;
subscriber equipment connected to a visited one of the plurality of networks through which the subscriber obtains an access to any network; and wherein
in response to connection of the subscriber equipment to the visited network, an identification of the subscriber and an access to be provided to the subscriber is sent to the home network, and a subscriber profile of an authorized access to be provided to the subscriber is stored in one of the networks and access of the subscriber to any network is controlled by one of the networks storing the subscriber network dependent upon a comparison of the access to be provided to the subscriber and the stored subscriber profile.
35. A system in accordance with claim 34 further comprising:

a network entity within the home network which stores the subscriber profile.

36. A system in accordance with claim 34 further comprising:

a network entity within the visited network which stores the subscriber profile.

37. A method of controlling access of a subscriber to register in networks comprising:

during or after the subscriber registers in a network, providing an identification of the subscriber and an access at a home network of the subscriber, the access comprising an identification of access to one of the networks in which the subscriber is registered.

38. A method in accordance with claim 37 wherein:

in response to the providing of the identification of the subscriber and the access at the home network, storing a subscriber profile indicating an access to be provided to the subscriber to at least the networks; and

using the stored subscriber profile in controlling service provided to the subscriber.

39. A method in accordance with claim 38 wherein:

the controlling of the service provided to the subscriber occurs while the subscriber is registered in a visited network and the networks are access networks from which the subscriber may obtain services while roaming in the visited network.

40. A method in accordance with claim 39 wherein:

the controlling of the service provided to the subscriber occurs from a request of a call controlling entity.

41. A method in accordance with claim 37 comprising:

storing the subscriber profile in the home network.

42. A method in accordance with claim 39 comprising:

storing the subscriber profile in the home network.

43. A method in accordance with claim 39 comprising:

storing the subscriber profile in the visited network.

44. A method in accordance with claim 37 wherein:

the sending of the identification of the subscriber and an access occurs in response to the transmission of an access type indicator identifying a network in which the subscriber is registered through the visited network to the home network or in response to a request from a call serving entity.

45. A method in accordance with claim 39 wherein:

the sending of the identification of the subscriber and an access occurs in response to the transmission of an access type indicator identifying a network in which the subscriber is registered through the visited network to the home network or in response to a request from a call serving entity.

46. A method in accordance with claim 41 wherein:

the sending of the identification of the subscriber and an access occurs in response to the transmission of an access type indicator identifying a network in which the subscriber is registered through the visited network to the home network.

47. A method in accordance with claim 42 wherein:

the sending of the identification of the subscriber and an access occurs in response to the transmission of an

access type indicator identifying a network in which the subscriber is registered through the visited network to the home network.

48. A method in accordance with claim 43 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the networks.

49. A method in accordance with claim 44 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the access networks.

50. A method in accordance with claim 45 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the access networks.

51. A method in accordance with claim 46 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the networks.

52. A method in accordance with claim 47 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the access networks.

53. A method in accordance with claim 46 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the access networks.

54. A method in accordance with claim 47 wherein:

the subscriber profile comprises general service data used in providing service to the subscriber and data regarding permitted access of the subscriber to the access networks.

55. A method in accordance with claim 42 wherein:

the application level of access originates from equipment of the subscriber registered to one of the networks.

56. A method in accordance with claim 43 wherein:

the access originates from an entity providing an interface between the visited network and one of the access networks to which the subscriber is registered.

57. A method in accordance with claim 44 wherein:

the access is determined by a call control entity based upon information obtained by the control entity about the network to which the subscriber is registered.

58. A method in accordance with claim 39 wherein:

in response to at least one subsequent identification of the subscriber and the access being provided at the home network, the home network sends to the visited network an acknowledgment of a change in registration of the subscriber to another access network.

59. A method in accordance with claim 37 wherein:

the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.

- 60.** A method in accordance with claim 39 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 61.** A method in accordance with claim 41 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 62.** A method in accordance with claim 44 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 63.** A method in accordance with claim 48 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 64.** A method in accordance with claim 55 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 65.** A method in accordance with claim 56 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 66.** A method in accordance with claim 57 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 67.** A method in accordance with claim 58 wherein:
the access is used by the home network to control connectivity of communications to the subscriber through the home network.
- 68.** A method of controlling access of a subscriber to register in networks comprising:
providing an identification of the subscriber at a home network;
in response to the providing of the identification of the subscriber, storing a subscriber profile of an access to be provided to the subscriber to at least the networks; and
using the stored subscriber profile in controlling service provided to the subscriber.
- 69.** A method in accordance with claim 68 wherein:
the controlling of the service provided to the subscriber occurs while the subscriber is registered in a visited network and the networks are access networks from which the subscriber may obtain services while registered in the visited network.
- 70.** A method in accordance with claim 68 comprising:
storing the subscriber profile in the home network.
- 71.** A method in accordance with claim 69 comprising:
storing the subscriber profile in the home network.
- 72.** A method in accordance with claim 69 comprising:
storing the subscriber profile in the visited network.
- 73.** A method in accordance with claim 69 wherein:
the providing of the identification of the subscriber occurs in response to transmission of an access type indicator to the home network identifying an access network.
- 74.** A method in accordance with claim 70 wherein:
the providing of the identification of the subscriber occurs in response to transmission of an access type indicator to the home network identifying an access network.
- 75.** A method in accordance with claim 71 wherein:
the access originates from equipment of the subscriber registered to one of the networks.
- 76.** A method in accordance with claim 72 wherein:
the access originates from an interface between the visited network and one of the access networks.
- 77.** A method in accordance with claim 71 wherein:
the access is determined by a call control entity based upon information obtained by the control entity about the network.
- 78.** A system comprising:
networks in which the subscriber may register;
a home network in which a plurality of subscriber profiles are stored, each of the profiles defining an access to be provided to a subscriber while registered in the networks;
subscriber equipment which is connected to the networks while the subscriber is registered therein; and wherein in response to connection of the subscriber equipment to one of the networks at least an identification of the subscriber is provided at the home network, a subscriber profile of an access to be provided to the subscriber to at least the networks is stored, and the stored subscriber profile is used in controlling service provided to the subscriber.
- 79.** A system in accordance with claim 78 wherein:
the controlling of the service provided to the subscriber occurs while the subscriber is registered in a visited network and the networks are access networks from which the subscriber may obtain services while registered in the visited network.
- 80.** A system in accordance with claim 78 comprising:
a storage in a visited network which stores the subscriber profile.
- 81.** A system in accordance with claim 79 comprising:
a storage in the visited network which stores the subscriber profile.
- 82.** A system in accordance with claim 79 wherein:
an access comprising an identification of access to one of the networks in which the subscriber is registered is transmitted from the visited network to the home network and the storing of the subscriber profile is in response to the identification of access at the home network.
- 83.** A system in accordance with claim 79 wherein:
the stored subscriber profile is used by the visited network in controlling service provided to the subscriber.
- 84.** A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the access is an application level access.

* * * * *



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(54) **SYNCHRONIZATION OF SIGNALING MESSAGES AND MULTIMEDIA CONTENT LOADING**

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(58) Field of Search **455/502, 436, 455/408, 560, 445, 461, 517, 433; 370/503, 509, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 400, 401, 328, 338, 350; 725/76, 109; 709/233**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method synchronizes signaling messages and multimedia content loading at a callee terminal. A first signaling message transmitted from a caller terminal to initiate a multimedia session establishment is processed to detect, in the first signaling message, information indicating that the multimedia content should be presented in synchronization with a second signaling message necessary to session establishment. The multimedia content is downloaded and presented in accordance with the information indicating that the multimedia content should be presented in synchronization with said second signaling message necessary to session establishment. The second signaling message necessary to session establishment is delayed until after the step of downloading and presenting the multimedia content in accordance with the information indicating that the multimedia content should be presented in synchronization with the second signaling message is completed.

39 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets

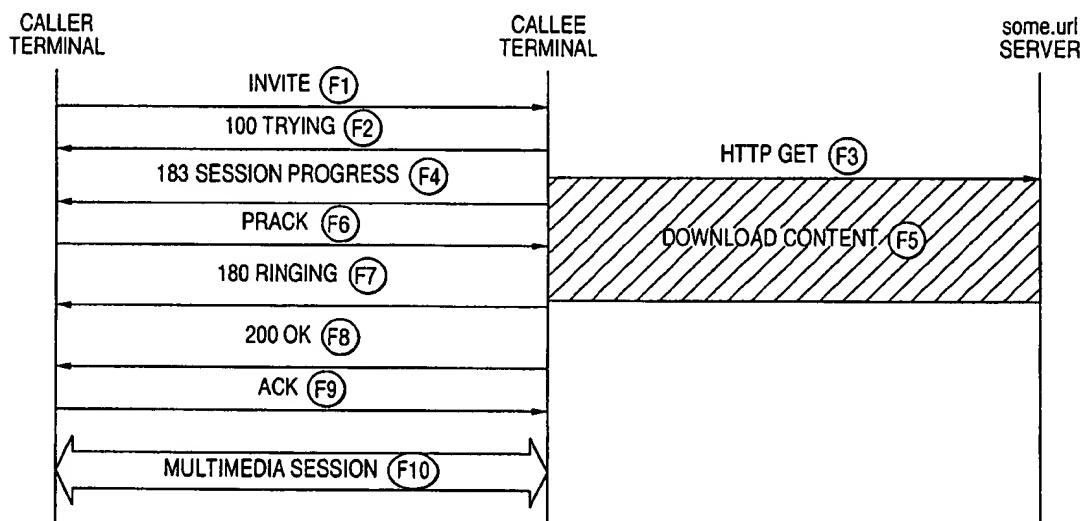
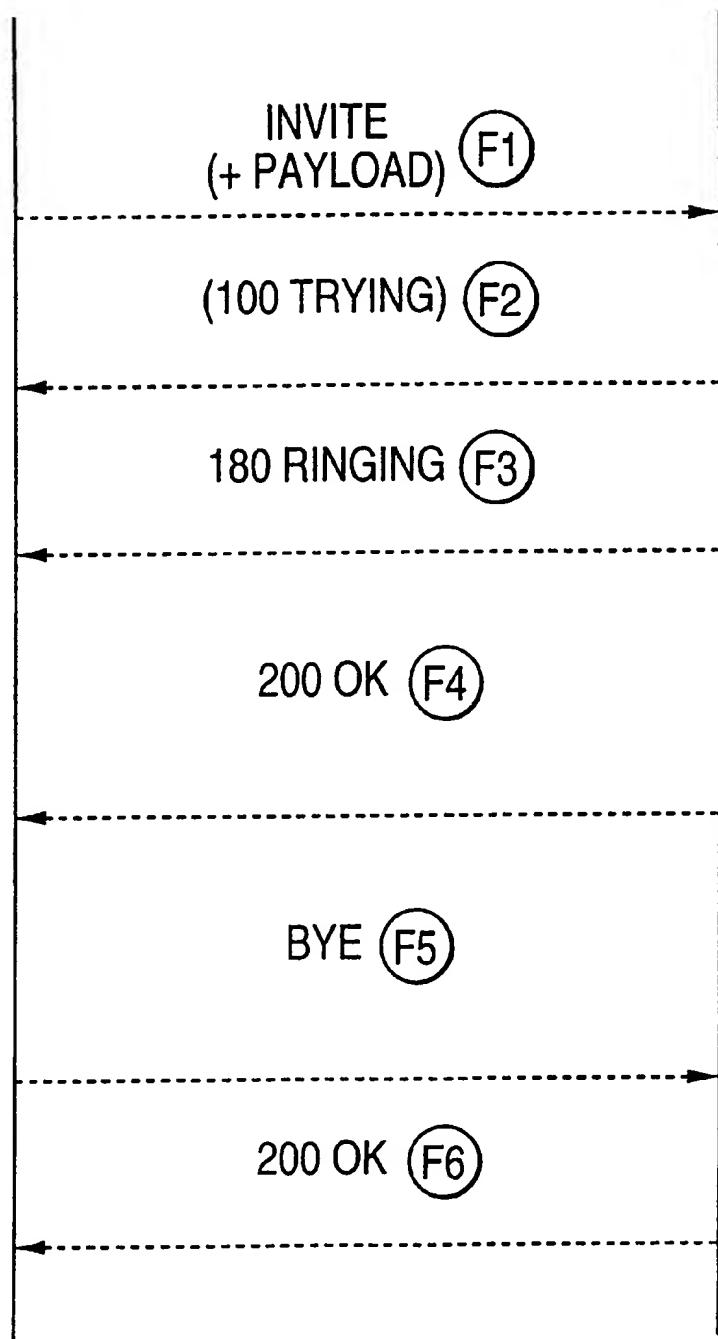


FIG. 1

USER A

USER B



CALLER TERMINAL
CALLEE TERMINAL
some.url SERVER

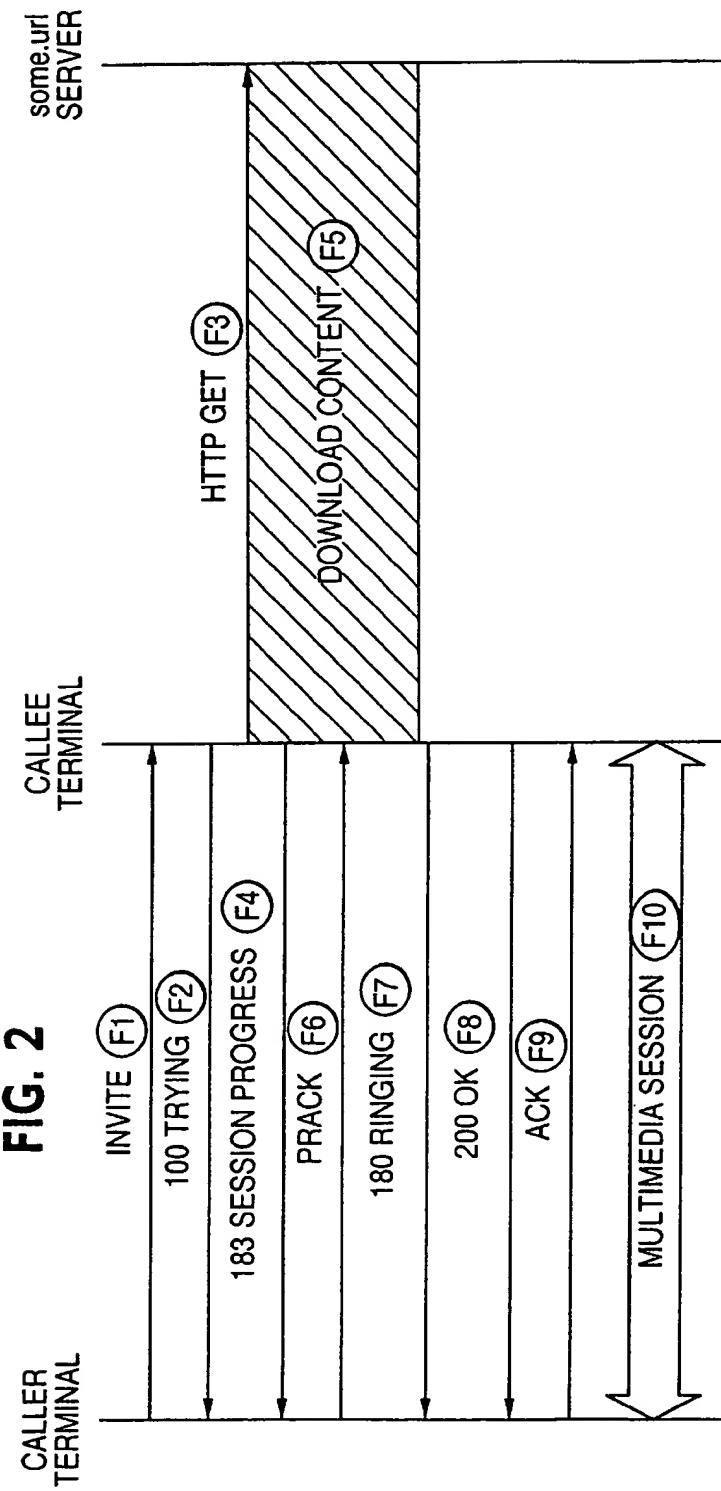
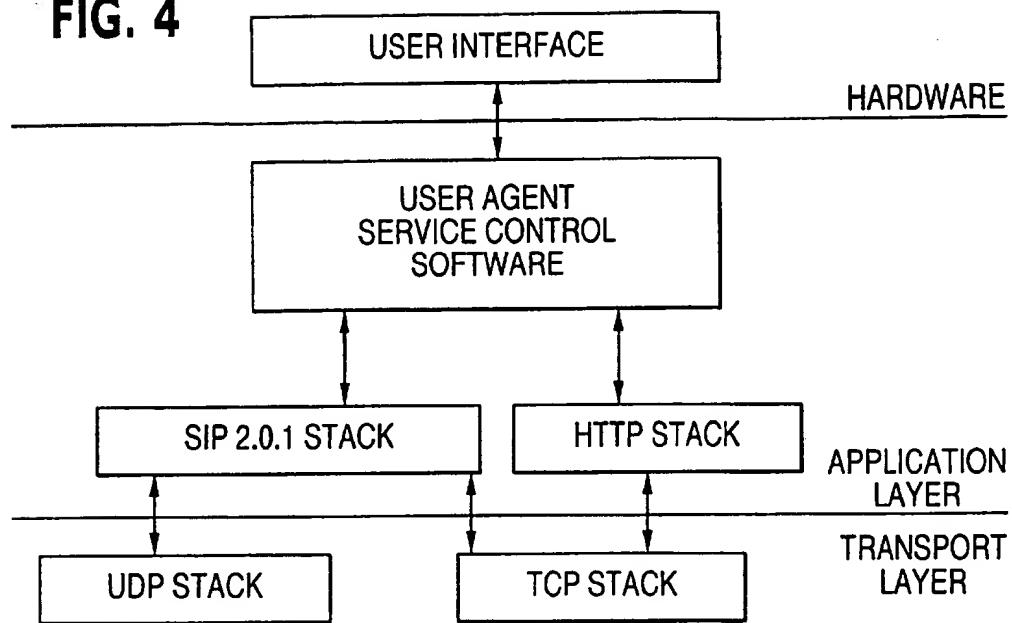
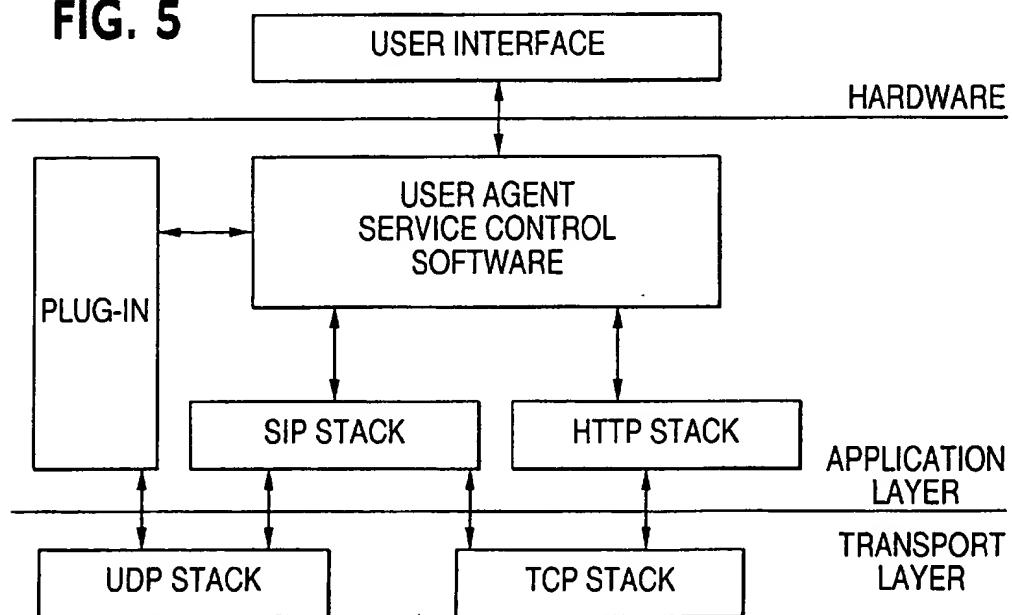


FIG. 2

F1 INVITE sip:callee@customer.com SIP/2.0.1
Via: SIP/2.0.1/UDP company.com:5060
To: Callee <sip:callee@customer.com>
From: Caller <sip:caller@customer.com>
Call-ID: 123456789@company.com
CSeq: 1 INVITE
SynchronizeLoading: some.url.com 180

FIG. 3

FIG. 4**FIG. 5**

**SYNCHRONIZATION OF SIGNALING
MESSAGES AND MULTIMEDIA CONTENT
LOADING**

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to the field of communications. In particular, the invention relates to the use of signaling messages in multimedia communications.

2. Discussion of the Related Art

There are numerous network transport protocols that carry various forms and combinations of multimedia content such as voice, video, web content, graphics and text. Signaling messages work in concert with these transport protocols by enabling terminals on communications networks to contact one another and agree on the parameters of a multimedia session they would like to share. A session is considered to be any exchange of data between two or more terminals.

A recent example of signaling messages is the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) developed by the Internet Engineering Task Force Version 2.0 of SIP was published by the IETF in 1999 as RFC 2543. An Internet-Draft containing bug fixes and clarifications to SIP 2.0 was published in 2000 as RFC 2543bis. Since then, there have been a few revisions of SIP 2.0 and there are likely to be more revisions and backwardly compatible extensions of SIP 2.0 in the future. For the sake of simplicity all such known and future revisions and backwardly compatible extensions of SIP 2.0 will be referred to in this application simply as "SIP" or "SIP 2.0".

A variety of SIP messages are used to establish, modify, and terminate multimedia sessions. The names and numbers of the messages are defined in RFC 2543bis. A SIP multimedia session can be a conference, but is not necessarily a conference. Common examples of SIP multimedia sessions are Internet telephony calls, video streaming, etc. SIP is an application-layer protocol that works without dependency on the type of session that is being established. Like the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), SIP is based on a request/response transaction model. Each transaction consists of a request that evokes a particular method or function and at least one response.

A variety of multimedia communication services may be implemented using SIP application servers and SIP messages to setup and control the sessions. A SIP message can also be used to carry content payloads (MIME types such as JPEG) inside the message without having to first set up a multimedia session. This offers the possibility of providing push or push-like "non-call" services such as instant messaging. For example, even though the SIP INVITE message is a signaling message, it may be used for this purpose. MIME-payloads such as image/jpeg or audio/midi may be included in one INVITE message. Other SIP message types (e.g. INFO) may also be used and new message types may be defined for the purpose of providing payload without setting up a multimedia session.

FIG. 1 shows a simple method of using the SIP INVITE message to send data without setting up a multimedia session. First, User A sends a SIP INVITE message (F1) to User B which includes a payload inside it. User B responds by returning "100 Trying" (F2), "180 Ringing" (F3), and "200 OK" (F4), which confirms receipt of the message. User A then sends a "BYE" message (F5), to User B which acknowledges this message by returning "200 OK" (F6).

This method has the disadvantage that it can create significantly increased signaling load. When used in conjunction with the User Datagram Protocol (UDP), RFC 768, the method has the further disadvantage that the SIP messages cannot carry attachments which are larger than about 1.5 KB. Message segmentation or transport using the Transport Control Protocol (TCP) are also undesirable. Furthermore, there can be some content, such as some of that on the World Wide Web, which cannot be utilized any other way than by using a Uniform Resource Locator (URL), RFC 1738.

RFC 2543.bis and WO 00/51306 describe a system in which a URL may be placed in a SIP message instead of a payload and the user receiving the SIP message containing the URL obtains the data from the server corresponding to the URL and presents it to the user. This URL is the same as that used by other Internet protocols. The domain name in the URL may be that of the person sending the SIP message, a SIP service provider, a third party, etc. Unfortunately, the manner and duration of the procedure necessary for obtaining the data may vary widely and unpredictably. The procedure may be affected by such factors as, for example, the type and amount of data, the bandwidth capacity of the network of either the user or the server corresponding to the URL, etc. The procedure may be especially slow, sporadic and/or unreliable in wireless communication networks. As a result, the loading and presenting of the data may be completed and occur during any one of the phases of the call establishment setup. For example, the data may be loaded and presented either: before the 180 Ringing message (F3); between the 180 Ringing message (F3) and the 200 OK message (F4); or after the 200 OK message (F4). It is even possible that, if the session is short and the download takes a long time, the download might not even be completed before the session is terminated. This may be undesirable since the data may be presented to the user at different times in different sessions. The situation where the downloaded content is presented a considerable length of time after the phone starts to ring is particularly undesirable.

The problem is exacerbated in third generation (3G) wireless communication networks supporting advanced mobile terminals and allowing a user to subscribe to and access a variety of different multimedia communication services. An advanced mobile terminal supported by such a network and using the latest innovations in computers, software, displays and other technologies may access and receive many different multimedia formats. These multimedia services may be provided by different information sources in other networks and may be based on and built upon a variety of data transfer techniques. This introduces more delay and uncertainty into the procedure associated with loading and presentation of data located at a URL included in a SIP message.

For at least these reasons, present methods of utilizing SIP to transfer multimedia content have disadvantages, especially for user terminals supporting may different types of communications services or in certain types of networks, such as wireless communication networks. Accordingly, there is a need for an effective solution that allows for synchronization of SIP messages and multimedia content loading.

BRIEF SUMMARY

It is therefore an object of the following described example embodiments to overcome the above mentioned disadvantages. In particular, an object of the example embodiments is to provide a solution which facilitates

synchronization of signaling messages and multimedia content loading in a user terminal.

In the example embodiments, the URL necessary for obtaining multimedia content from a server or other network element maintaining the content is included in a first signaling message. The user terminal receiving the first signaling message is able to communicate with the server or other network element as desired to synchronize the loading and presentation of the multimedia content according to other information provided to the user terminal in the first signaling message.

A particular aspect of the example embodiments involves an extension to SIP INVITE messages that allows the downloading and presentation of the multimedia content to be controlled by requesting that it be synchronized with a particular SIP message in a call set-up procedure. A user agent in the user terminal receiving the SIP INVITE message responds by sending messages to a URL and as necessary according to a protocol designated in the SIP INVITE message and coordinating the downloading and presentation of the content. The user agent in the terminal may coordinate all of the ongoing messages. The messages used to download the content may be of a type or in accordance with a protocol or otherwise of a manner useful or necessary for communications that differs from SIP messages.

A particularly useful application of the example embodiments is in a service in which a specific piece of multimedia information is downloaded and presented on the user terminal without being initiated by the user and at the same time that the user is alerted of the request for a session. The user terminal exchanges messages with a network entity which manages the multimedia information without the knowledge of the user. According to such an application of the example embodiments, the multimedia information appears, from the perspective of the user, to have been received from the caller simultaneously with the request for a session.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A more complete appreciation of the example embodiments, and many of the attendant advantages thereof, will become readily apparent as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 shows an example of the SIP signaling messages transferred between users in a method in which a payload is included in the SIP INVITE message.

FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of an example method of synchronizing SIP messages and multimedia content according to an example embodiment.

FIG. 3 is an example of SIP INVITE message F1 in the flow diagram of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a first example of part of the software architecture of a user terminal which may be used to perform any of the example embodiments disclosed herein.

FIG. 5 is a second example of part of the software architecture of a user terminal which may be used to perform any of the example embodiments disclosed herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The example embodiments use a new, specially designated header in the SIP INVITE message to have the loading and presentation of multimedia information synchronized in

a user's terminal. Attention now is directed to the drawings and particularly to FIG. 2, which shows the flow diagram for a method according to the example embodiments, keeping in mind that the example embodiments may be carried out between a variety of different types of network entities and in a variety of different networks.

Although FIG. 2 refers to user terminals, it should be understood that the method according to the example embodiments may in fact be provided by a SIP application server located in the same network as one of the terminals or in another network or on the Internet. The communication services made available by such an SIP application server may include SIP services other than those which use the method according to the example embodiments. It should also be understood that any one of the terminals may use a proxy server, especially if the terminal is a mobile terminal in a wireless communication network.

As illustrated in FIG. 2, the method begins with the caller terminal sending a SIP INVITE message (F1). An example 20 of the SIP INVITE message (F1) is shown in FIG. 3. Like conventional SIP INVITE messages, SIP INVITE message (F1) includes the start line and the "Via", "To", "From", "Call-ID", and "C-Seq" headers. In addition, the SIP INVITE message (F1) also includes a new header 25 designated, merely as an example, as "SynchronizeLoading". This header contains a URL and the number of a designated SIP response message. The header may have the URL and the number of the designated SIP response message separated by a space from each other as illustrated in FIG. 3, but another syntax can be used as well. In the example of FIG. 3, the URL is listed as "some.url" and the designated SIP response message is the 180 Ringing message. It is also possible that the URL is located in the payload and that the "SynchronizeLoading" header contains only the 30 information designating the message with which the payload 35 should be synchronized.

Upon receipt of the SIP INVITE message (F1), the callee terminal immediately returns a 100 trying response message (F2) just as it would for any other SIP INVITE message 40 (F1). However, the user agent in the callee terminal, upon detecting the "SynchronizeLoading" header in the SIP INVITE message (F1), begins a process of downloading and presenting multimedia content according the URL in the "SynchronizeLoading" header. In the example shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, the URL is "http://some.url". So the user agent sends a HTTP GET message (F3) to the location "some.url" to begin the process of downloading the multimedia content therefrom. If another protocol such as FTP (file transfer protocol) is designated, then the user agent would instead 50 use the initial message appropriate to begin downloading the content according to such a protocol. As indicated above, several factors may affect the download process (F5). The amount of time and the number and variety of signaling messages necessary to download the multimedia content 55 may vary greatly from session to session. For ease of illustration, FIG. 2 illustrates the download process as a lined block (F5).

After sending the HTTP GET (F3) or other initial message to the URL to begin the download process, the user agent in 60 the callee terminal sends a 183 session progress message (F4). This type of SIP response message indicates that information about the progress of the session (call state) is present in the message body. A conventional use of a 183 session progress message is to provide a ring tone, welcome screen, recorded announcement, etc, to the caller terminal so that the caller knows that the session is progressing. In the method according to the example embodiments, the 183

session progress message (F4) may inform the caller of the fact that the download process (F5) has begun. Preferably, because of the desire for synchronization in the method according to the example embodiments, the caller terminal returns a PRACK message (F6) to acknowledge receipt of the 183 session progress message (F4). Although not shown in FIG. 2, the method according to the example embodiments may continue certain parts of call set up such as sending COMET messages and negotiating SDP (session description protocol) parameters during download process (F5).

In the method according to the example embodiments, the download process (F5) is controlled so that the presentation of the downloaded multimedia content is synchronized to occur simultaneously with the SIP response message designated in the "SynchronizeLoading" header of the SIP INVITE message. In the example shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, the 180 ringing message is designated and the downloaded multimedia content is synchronized to be presented simultaneously with the transfer of the 180 ringing message (F7) from the callee terminal to the caller terminal and the corresponding alerting of the callee. This means that the 183 ringing message (F7) is delayed until the downloading and presentation is complete. From the perspective of the callee, the downloaded information is received at the same time as the alert or just prior to the alert and appears to be received directly from the caller. The manner of presentation corresponds to the downloaded multimedia content and would consist of audio only if the content was audio only, video only if the content was video only, etc.

The multimedia content to be downloaded may take a variety of forms and be in any number and combination of multimedia formats (video, audio, web graphics, animation, etc.). The content may serve a variety of informational purposes. It may, for example, announce the identity of the caller or service, either with text, audio, video or graphics. The information may be, for example, the electronic equivalent of a business card or a greeting or welcome screen. If the method is implemented in a service providing, for example, sports scores, the downloaded information could be a logo of the callee's favorite sports team, etc. The downloaded information could be a document or other information that the caller wishes to discuss with the caller in the requested communication session. The downloaded information could also be "default" service information providing the callee with, for example, a menu providing the various service options (answer the call, take a message, forward call, etc.).

After the 180 ringing message (F7), the remainder of the method is similar to the conventional method. It includes a 200 OK message (F8) from the callee terminal to the caller terminal, an ACK message (F9) from the caller terminal to the callee terminal recognizing the 200 OK message (F8) and the multimedia session itself (F10). It should be kept in mind that the "SynchronizeLoading" header in the SIP INVITE message may designate the 200 OK message (F8) rather than the 180 ringing message (F7) and thus the 200 OK message (F8) rather than the 180 ringing message (F7) would be delayed until the downloading and presentation of the multimedia content is complete.

Preferably, the user agent of the callee terminal contains a timer which limits the maximum amount of time that the designated 180 ringing message or 200 OK message may be delayed from the beginning of the download process. This prevents the user agent from being blocked if an error or exception condition occurs during downloading or presentation of the multimedia content. The user agent of the callee

terminal may also immediately terminate the delay of the designated 180 ringing message or 200 OK message if an error or exception condition occurs during downloading or presentation of the multimedia content.

The method described with respect to FIG. 2 may be advantageously applied by a SIP application server or proxy server to provide push or push-like services either with or without setting up a multimedia session (F10). The SIP application server or proxy server may maintain and provide

10 the services (e.g., user subscriptions, content information and storage location) or act as a gateway between callers/service providers by providing the SIP INVITE message modified from a conventional SIP INVITE message as described above to the callees. In such an arrangement, only 15 the SIP application server or proxy server and the callee terminals would need to be able to carry out the method according to the example embodiments. The caller terminals/service providers would not have to include the functionality.

20 An important aspect of the example embodiments is that the caller terminal can make the desired multimedia content easily available to the callee terminal at the most opportune time using a "SynchronizeLoading" header in the SIP INVITE message. Preferably, the network operator or other party can manage the services utilizing the method according to the example embodiments so that the callee is not exposed to undesirable or objectionable material.

Another advantage is that the method according to the example embodiments involves only a minor extension of the SIP 2.0 specifications in the form of a simple header at the callee terminals (and to a SIP application server). FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate two examples of a relevant part of the software architecture in the callee terminal. In the first example shown in FIG. 4, the user agent utilizes a modified version of the conventional SIP 2.0 protocol stack in the user agent of the callee terminal which includes additional support for the "SynchronizeLoading" header (this modified version being referred to as SIP 2.0.1). The SIP 2.0.1 stack continues to work in concert with the UDP or TCP transport protocols and the User Agent Service Control Software to carry out the method shown in FIG. 2. Another protocol stack, such as an HTTP stack, is utilized to download the multimedia content and present it on the user interface of the callee terminal. Preferably, known APIs (application programming interfaces) are employed between the various software modules shown in FIG. 4.

Recognizing that it may be desirable to use the method according to the example embodiments in terminals such as mobile phones which already contain a SIP 2.0 stack, FIG. 5 illustrates a second example of the software architecture of a user agent in a callee terminal. In this second example, a separate software module, such as a plug-in, is added to the user agent to provide the extension to the SIP 2.0 protocol stack and to carry out the method according to the example embodiments illustrated in FIG. 2. Such an arrangement makes it unnecessary for a person to replace a terminal having a SIP 2.0 protocol stack with a new terminal having native supporting for the SIP extension and method described herein. The software plug-in preferably uses conventional APIs to communicate with the SIP 2.0 stack and the User Agent Service Control Software.

The method according to the example embodiments is applicable for use with all types of networks and interconnected systems using SIP for multimedia sessions of voice, message, data and image between terminals. Such networks may include, for example, the Internet, local area networks

(LANs) whether Ethernet or wireless, cellular and other wireless communication networks, such as bluetooth and Wideband CDMA (WCDMA) networks. SIP transparently supports name mapping and redirection services, which makes it well suited for wireless communication networks (i.e., users can maintain a single externally visible identifier (i.e., SIP Uniform Resource Identifier (URI)) regardless of their network location. Technical Specification TS 23.228 V5.0.0 of the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), discloses a 3G wireless communication network (hereinafter referred to simply as the "3G network") including an Internet Protocol Multimedia Core Network Subsystem (IMS) able to support SIP messaging for multimedia communication services and which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety as an example network environment in which the example embodiments may be implemented. The 3G network has a Home Subscriber Server (HSS) containing user related information such as user identification (UserID), numbering, address information, and a user profile including, for example, subscription information, services and service specific information. In addition to knowledge about ongoing communication services, there may also be other information, such as numerous parameters and/or settings, needed by the user terminal to receive those communication services. The parameters and/or settings may include for instance communication networks parameters, such as General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) parameters or Universal Mobile Telecommunication System (UMTS) parameters, Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) parameters comprising a WAP Gateway address a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for setup, a home page and favorites, World Wide Web (WWW) parameters comprising a Hyper Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP) proxy address, SMTP/POP3 addresses, public keys, Ipv4, Ipv6, and a Default Classmark for multi-classmark devices. There may also be general information, such as network subscription and authorization information or calling plan information or lists of telephone numbers, stored in the user terminal and which is desired to be available to the user to enable or facilitate communications. The 3G network also has a Serving Call Session Control Function (S-CSCF) which provides call control, session control and service control for user terminals. Other than the interface to HSS, S-CSCF utilizes the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) or an extension or backward compatible revision thereof for all connections to other network elements. When a terminal is visiting a network other than its home network, the visited network preferably utilizes a Proxy Call Session Control Function (P-CSCF) that enables the session control to be passed to the home network based S-CSCF providing service control for the terminal. A SIP Application Server may be located within the IMS and connected directly to S-CSCF or to a P-CSCF to provide various SIP multimedia communication services as described above.

Of course, in a particular implementation, a user in a network is likely to receive a combination of different services. However, as described, the method according to the example embodiments can be used only for selected services or even for only selected sessions of a service as determined by a SIP application server. As can be seen from the foregoing, using a special header in the SIP INVITE message yields a fast and efficient solution for downloading and presenting multimedia information in synchronization with a session. While the invention has been described with reference to example embodiments, the description is illustrative and is not to be construed as limiting the invention. In particular, the various references to user agents and user

terminals refers merely to the terminology used in association with SIP and is not meant to imply that the method according to the example embodiments must only be used with certain types of network elements.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of synchronizing signaling messages and multimedia content loading, comprising:
at a callee terminal, processing a first signaling message transmitted from a caller terminal to initiate a multimedia session establishment by detecting, in said first signaling message, information indicating that said multimedia content should be presented in synchronization with a second signaling message necessary to session establishment;
downloading and presenting said multimedia content in accordance with said information indicating that said multimedia content should be presented in synchronization with said second signaling message; and
delaying said second signaling message necessary to session establishment until after completing said step of downloading and presenting said multimedia content in accordance with said information indicating that said multimedia content should be presented in synchronization with said second signaling message.
2. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein said first signaling message and said second signaling message respectively comprise a first SIP message and a second SIP message.
3. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
the first SIP message is a SIP INVITE message.
4. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
a header in said first signaling message designates said second signaling message necessary for session establishment.
5. A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:
said at least one message downloading the multimedia information uses a protocol other than the protocol used in said first signaling message.
6. A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:
the callee terminal is a mobile terminal is a wireless communication network.
7. A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:
the header in said first signaling message contains the address of said multimedia content.
8. A method in accordance with claim 6 wherein:
the wireless communication network is a 3G network providing a plurality of different multimedia services.
9. A method in accordance with claim 8 wherein:
at least two of said plurality of different multimedia services differ from each other in the manner in which multimedia content is downloaded to a user terminal.
10. A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:
the address of said multimedia content is a universal resource locator (URL) contained in the payload of said first signaling message.
11. A method in accordance with claim 7 wherein:
the address is a universal resource locator (URL).
12. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the multimedia content is related to the caller.
13. A method in accordance with claim 12 wherein:
the multimedia content identifies the caller.
14. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
the multimedia content is downloaded from a network other than the network in which the callee terminal is located.

15. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
said second SIP message necessary for session establishment is a 180 ringing message.
16. A method in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
said second SIP message necessary for session establishment is a 200 OK message.
17. A method in accordance with claim 3, wherein:
the SIP INVITE message is transmitted through a SIP application server or a proxy server.
18. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
the address of said multimedia content is included with
said first signaling message transmitted to the callee terminal;
19. A mobile terminal in a wireless communication network comprising:
a user agent which processes a first signaling message during session establishment to detect, from the first signaling message, information indicating that multimedia content should be downloaded and presented to the user in synchronization with a second signaling message necessary to session establishment; and
a protocol stack downloading and presenting said multimedia content in accordance with said information indicating that multimedia content should be downloaded and presented to the user in synchronization with said second signaling message necessary to session establishment; wherein
session establishment is completed by said user agent only after said multimedia content is downloaded and presented to the user in synchronization with said second signaling message necessary to session establishment.
20. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 19 wherein said first signaling message and said second signaling message respectively comprise a first SIP message and a second SIP message and said user agent comprises a SIP user agent.
21. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 19 wherein:
said multimedia content is stored at an addressable location and an address of where the multimedia content is stored is included with said first signaling message.
22. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 19 wherein:
the first signaling message is a SIP INVITE message.
23. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 20 wherein:
said protocol stack is a protocol stack other than a SIP protocol stack.
24. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 23 wherein:
said protocol stack is a HTTP protocol stack.
25. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 20 wherein:
said SIP user agent sends a 183 session progress message when said multimedia content is being downloaded.
26. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 25 wherein:
said SIP user agent detects the presence of a header containing said information indicating that multimedia content should be downloaded and presented to the user

- in synchronization with said second SIP message necessary to session establishment.
27. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 26 wherein:
said header designates said second SIP message necessary to session establishment.
28. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 27, wherein:
said header contains the address of said multimedia content.
29. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 28, wherein:
the address is a universal resource locator (URL).
30. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 27, wherein:
the address of said multimedia content is a universal resource locator (URL) contained in the payload of said first signaling message.
31. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 20 wherein:
said second SIP message necessary to session establishment is a 180 ringing message.
32. A mobile terminal in accordance with claim 20 wherein:
said second SIP message necessary to session establishment is a 200 OK message.
33. A network element in a communications network, said network element performing a synchronization method comprising:
receiving a first signaling message transmitted from a caller terminal, said first signaling message initiating a multimedia session between said caller terminal and said callee terminal;
detecting information in said first signaling message indicating the location of multimedia content to be downloaded by said callee terminal;
modifying said first signaling message to include information indicating that said multimedia content should be presented on said callee terminal in synchronization with a second signaling message related to said multimedia session; and
forwarding said modified first signaling message to said callee terminal.
34. A network element in accordance with claim 33, wherein said first signaling message and said second signaling message respectively comprise a first SIP message and a second SIP message.
35. A network element in accordance with claim 34, wherein said network element comprises a SIP application server.
36. A network element in accordance with claim 35, wherein said SIP application server maintains and provides multimedia communications services to said callee terminal, and carries out said synchronization method for at least one of said multimedia communications services.
37. A network element in accordance with claim 36, wherein said at least one of said multimedia communication services comprises a push service.
38. A network element in accordance with claim 33, wherein said network element comprises a proxy server for said callee terminal.
39. A network element in accordance with claim 33, wherein at least one of said network element, callee terminal or multimedia content is located in a wireless communication network.

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